



Department of Justice

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COUPLE INDICTED ON HUMAN TRAFFICKING CHARGES

WASHINGTON, DC - The Justice Department today announced the indictment of a Michigan couple charged with forcing a juvenile Cameroonian girl into involuntary servitude for financial gain.

According to the three count indictment, Joseph Djoumessi and Evelyn Djoumessi violated federal law by fraudulently bringing a 14 year old Cameroonian girl into the United States and using her as an unpaid domestic servant in their Farmington Hills, Michigan home for almost four years. The Djoumessis are Cameroonian nationals and permanent resident aliens of the United States.

"Too often human traffickers bait young girls with promises of the American dream only to then force them into involuntary servitude. Civilized society cannot tolerate this," said R. Alexander Acosta, Assistant Attorney General for the Civil Rights Division. "The Justice Department takes these charges very seriously and is committed to prosecuting those who attempt to profit by the systematic abuse and degradation of others."

If convicted, the Djoumessis face a maximum sentence of up to 35 years in prison, restitution, and a \$250,000 fine for each count. An indictment is an accusation, and a defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

"These charges underscore the seriousness with which this administration views these types of offenses as well as our strong commitment to investigating and prosecuting these types of cases," said Craig S. Morford, Attorney for the Eastern District of Michigan.

The criminal charges in this indictment are the result of an investigation by the United States Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement. The case is being jointly prosecuted by attorneys from the Civil Rights Division and The United States Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of Michigan.

"It is a basic and fundamental human right to be free, and no child should ever be forced to live in a world of fear and involuntary servitude," said Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Special Agent in Charge Brian M. Moskowitz. "Today's indictment is a testament to our solemn commitment to protect those who cannot protect themselves. While we cannot restore someone's childhood, we can bring their abusers to justice."

The prosecution of individuals involved in human trafficking is a top priority of the Justice Department. Since 2001, the Justice Department has charged more than 150 human traffickers and secured convictions for 109 defendants, nearly twice the number convicted during the previous four years.

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